

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Our language choices can help people feel welcomed. Using inclusive language in our youth outreach helps cultivate a sense of belonging and allows young people to envision themselves more easily in an AFSCME-represented career. Whether you're having a conversation or developing youth outreach materials, do your best to **avoid assumptions about youth identity or family composition.**

Inclusive language “acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities” according to the Linguistic Society of America.

<https://www.lsadc.org/content.asp?contentid=199>

For instance, terms like mother and father can alienate young people raised by single parents, LGBTQIA+ couples, other family members, or those in the foster care system. Instead, try defaulting to more general, gender-neutral terms, especially in group settings. We can unintentionally exclude or stereotype individuals and groups through our language. For example, although it was once popular to ask people about their “spirit animal” as an ice breaker, this term trivializes Indigenous relationships with animals and can fail to recognize the diversity of Indigenous peoples.

As you adapt inclusive language into your outreach, give yourself and others grace. Although we may not get it right every time, the effort to be inclusive matters. Language evolves over time, and it is our job to change with it. Apologize when you make a mistake and try to get it right the next time.

GUIDELINES

- ✓ Refer to individuals and communities using terms with which they identify.
- ✓ Share your pronouns and create space for young people to share their pronouns.
- ✓ When referring to multiple individuals, try defaulting to they/them/theirs pronouns e.g. “Each student should sign their permission slip” instead of “his/her permission slip.”

EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Instead of....	Try...
mother and father	parent, caregiver, guardian
journeyman	journey worker, journey person
brothers and sisters	siblings
ladies and gentlemen	folks, team, everyone
tribe	group, crew, community
spirit animal	kindred spirit, favorite animal
boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife	partner, significant other
handicapped	disabled community, people with disabilities

RESOURCES



Information on pronouns

<https://youtu.be/OePy0AjVU7s>

Inclusivity Style Guide

<https://www.acs.org/about/diversity/inclusivity-style-guide.html#general-guidelines>



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